



SAFETY ALERT

Swimming Safety

Every accident is a tragedy, but the loss cuts even deeper when it involves one of our children. So far this summer, one child has drowned and one is in very critical condition after nearly drowning. Both children were on organized outings and under supervision; but even under these circumstances, the unthinkable happened.

Before sending a child on a sponsored outing, parents should ensure that the sponsoring organization has sound risk-management procedures and that these procedures will be used before the organization allows your child to enter the water. Ask tough questions.

Children can drown as easily in the middle of a crowded public pool as at a remote location, and it takes only a few seconds for them to get into trouble. The single biggest risk-reduction measure is vigilance.

Swimming safety is not limited to outings. At home, child pools are popular and often found in housing areas. An accessible, unattended pool, however, is dangerous, even if the pool holds only a little water. Play it safe. When a pool is not in use, drain it and put it away.

Our summer safety program and July 4th safety message, emphasize recreational water safety and provide risk-management information. Leaders must ensure that all soldiers and civilians receive that information. In addition, everyone should know and follow the basics of water safety. These include the following:

- ✓ Never let down your guard, even in “authorized” swimming areas. Swimming in these areas does not guarantee your safety. Neither does the presence of a lifeguard.
- ✓ Always swim with a buddy; but before you enter the water, find out how well your buddy can swim.
- ✓ Keep your own swimming ability in mind and be careful not to exceed that ability. Consider your strength and your skill before swimming out too far away from the shore or in water that may be too deep for you. Be reasonable in your assessment.
- ✓ Continuously assess the swimming conditions, and adjust risk-control measures as needed. If you are parent, ask yourself whether or not you can keep an eye on your child, especially if the water is crowded. Assess the risks based on your child’s age, size and swimming ability. Then act accordingly.

Ensure that this safety alert is given the widest possible distribution by forwarding it electronically and posting it on unit bulletin boards.